1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

but he did face about, and forgetting his seketi began to pole in earnest.

In a few moments his body glistened with the exertion, and over the circle and snake of kamemba in the small of his back the perspiration ran down in a trickle. When he had almost caught up he slackened his speed, and he and Bibifo talked about the river. Old Bibifo knew the river well. He was born beyond the Granman's country. A snake swam across the path of the boat, Bayo said. It was good luck. "See, look," he called. His eyes were sharp. The old man saw it, too, and then he called to us. There, close to the shore, a little ahead of us, a constrictor twined its tail about a liana, hanging head down, with a salamander slowly disappearing into its mouth. There was a slight jerk, the liana shook, the snake swallowed, and another bit of the salamander was out of sight.

Farther ahead we heard the report of a gun, and the crying of the mate of the wounded bird followed us for a long while. Bayo and Bibifo identified each cry, called by name the things that grew, planned about their timber rafts when they got back, until the next rapids were reached and passed and the conversation could be resumed, and then they talked about things which they did not care to have the Bakra know, and though they spoke none of the words of their ritual language, we could not understand anything they said. It was not until later that we learned to work out some of the elisions in their speech.

A strip of sandy beach showed where a village stood, and as we passed it, we could see the azang, the spiritual guard of palm fronds, preventing evil spirits from entering the village. We saw also a strip of white hanging from the end of a stick which had been put up for the ancestors, and beyond, the low shelter for the roughly carved and weathered image holding an obia pot on its head. Under the azang the path stretched like a narrow ribbon which was soon lost as the walls of green converged.

"Is that another village?" we said, pointing at a pale stretch across the river.

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Saramacca

"OBIA COMES!"

"Put them on. See the moon? You will catch fresh colds if you sit in the moonlight with your heads uncovered."

So with sun helmets on our heads we sat, and, as we listened to the new rhythms of the drums, there came a shriek from the river which brought us to our feet. Those who were not dancing ran up the hill away from the drums.

"Obia! Obia comes! It is the Kromanti!" were the cries, and our cook and our town man placed themselves in line across the front of our hut, watching uneasily.

"They will destroy all you have if they get inside," they called to us, "we must try to keep them out."

Up from the river, along the path he had trodden but a while before, came a man whom we could not recognize in the disguise given him by the paint on his face. Half his face was white, half a deep red, and we later learned what we did not then know, that this was the face marking of the Djadja Kromanti and that this man was possessed by one of the two Kromanti spirits which carry danger to those who are present when the seizure comes. He advanced toward the drums, machete in hand, as though he were stalking his prey, his legs raised high at every step, trailing some enemy. At his mouth the foam was gathering, and the words he uttered were in the Kromanti tongo, the sacred speech not understood by the uninitiated.

The songs changed in character, and the singers were men. The women who had not run away were dancing a quick accompaniment to the drum beats, adding their shrill voices to the singing and the intensity of the cries of the possessed man. When the possessed man reached the hut, he stopped in front of the drummers. As their rhythms poured out of the barrel-like drums, he answered stroke for stroke with shouted cries in his sacred secret language, raising his machete higher and higher, until, with a quick stroke, he slashed at two of the players who were seated side by side on a log. He missed them by what seemed a hair's breadth as his machete, whistling through the narrow space between their bodies, sank deep into the log on which they sat.

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Saramaccaner

tempted it would find himself deserted by his paddlers, lug- 484
gage deposited in the bush, scrupulously intact, while his 648
paddlers went along the river warning the villages against the malicious bahkra. And there he would remain, set down in the bush, unable to get more paddlers, until hunger made him humble. In the interior there is no means of transportation, no communication, except by Djukas. So on the whole the white man is largely subject to the will of his guides, over whom he has only nominal control; it behooves him to put up with their whims, and to avoid the mistake of trying to command them.

Gradually the canoes float apart, but the talking continues. 198
A thought pops into a black head and is shouted across the 484
intervening water. Questions, answers, continue though the 648
boats are now some distance away from each other. To make their words carry far over the water, the Djukas actually lower their voices, singing out the words in a sustained, resonant tone that makes a mellow sound across the waves. This long drawn-out "Ah-e-e-e" can be heard after the other corial has passed far down the river. Out of sight around a bend, we can still hear the other Bush Negroes intoning strange words.

Not being able to follow the conversation, we ask the cook, 198
Bundle, what it's about. Bundle does not know. The Djukas 191
are not using talkee-talkee now. They are using an obscure 484
tongue. When the Bush Negroes converse with outsiders 648
they employ the talkee-talkee language which white men and Paramaribo Town Negroes can understand. But they also

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

have a tribal language called *odo, deepee-talkee,* or *Saramaccatongo* known only among themselves; they are members of the Saramaccaner tribe.

Before the other corial is out of earshot, the Djukas bid us good-bye with the familiar words: *"Wakka bon na watra, bahkra!" "Gran danke, matio"*—"Many thanks, my uncle," we respond, adding the *o* sound to the last word to make it carry over the waves, as they do. To them "uncle" is the most respectful appellation that can be used, similar to our respectful use of the word "father." For them a maternal uncle is more important than a father.

For a while now the poling continues in silence. Further on we pass a lone Djuka on the bank, skilfully setting a fish trap constructed of sticks and *lianas.* Far away upstream can be heard the muffled report of a shotgun; some black hunter is bringing in game. The angry currents slap constantly against the side of the corial. We round another bend and see ahead only more rapids, where rocks make innumerable white ripples in the muddy water.

A stop is made for lunch at one of the many islands. Bundle brings out canned food and the gipsy pot. The river looks enticing and cool. The bahkra begins taking off his clothes for a swim in the water near shore. The Negroes are abashed at his nakedness, and Bundle tactfully advises him to be more modest.

The waters in this part of the great South American rain forest are infested with the Brazilian piranha or piraya (*Serrasalmo sp.*), a species of carnivorous fish. They are small,

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Aucaner
Saramaccaner
Boni

619 In general appearance and culture the Aucaners vary little
184 from the other large tribe, the Saramaccaners.

[531] The art motifs and their treatment as displayed on the Aucaner wood carvings as a rule differ from those of the Saramaccaners. On the other hand, some of the pieces were found to be practically identical.

The Aucaner talkee-talkee also differs from that of the Saramaccaners, the former being more like the speech of the
[197 Town Negroes. The Aucaners have no deepee-talkee or odo
198 as have the Saramaccaners, but they have a dialect known as
191] *Koropina* where a *p* or an *m* is spoken before the vowels in a word for the purpose of confusing strangers. A similar custom is prevalent among the Negroes of Curaçao, Dutch West Indies.

[291] The dress of the Aucaners is the same as that of the Saramaccaners, excepting that they affect more often the breast-cloth, the *wassapangye,* and the head-cloth, the *mussu.*

Among the Aucaners the toga garment is called the *yembah,* while it is called a camissa by the Saramaccaners. The barrier of palm leaves is called *chifunga* by the Aucaners and *azang pau* by the Saramaccaners.

[262 The system of food taboos and general culture are the
606 same. There is no mother-in-law taboo among either the
194] Aucaners or the Saramaccaner tribe.

[161] The Boni tribe, which consists of about 900 people, is de-
648 scended from escaped slaves who crossed the Marowyne River into French Guiana and who were allowed to remain there unmolested by the French authorities. This is the only

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Paramaribo. Outside the boundaries of Dutch Guiana it is unknown.

Talkee-talkee is a pure-vowelled pidgin language, as picturesque as the countryside itself. Its vocabulary is drawn from many tongues, although English and Dutch words preponderate. The Dutch words are either vestiges of the slave days or infiltrations from the daily speech of the present Dutch colonists. The English words may date from the British occupation of the country, which lasted, with some brief intervals, from 1630 to 1674; or they may come from the English-speaking colony on the west, brought in by British Guiana balata bleeders. As numbers of the early colonists were Jews, originally from Brazil, Spain, or Portugal, as well as from Holland, one still encounters occasional Jewish terms, like *trafer* (taboo), among the Bush Negro speech. There are also a few French words, like *bon,* which still retains its original nasalization. They come from the convict colony toward the east. A few Spanish and Portuguese words, like *balata* and *camissa,* add to the variety of tongues. And finally we recognize a certain light sprinkling of West African dialect, such as *pekein* meaning small.

When the bahkra becomes accustomed to local idioms, the learning of talkee-talkee is not difficult, and the many familiar or half-familiar phrases are of great assistance. At first glance one might expect to find the Bush Negroes speaking a language largely Dutch, but this is not the case. It is doubtful, says one commentator, whether Dutch will ever be widespread among them, because their ancestors who came from

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Equatorial Africa were accustomed to the use of many broad, open vowels, and "no faucal gutturals or abruptly collocated consonants" (H. H. Johnson). Talkee-talkee is fluent and euphonious, with many haunting phrases and graceful involutions. The phrase that designates the spider stories, *anansi-tories,* is markedly musical; *balata bleeding,* with its succession of broad vowels, is a memorable term.

The early rebels came from many different tribes, and were thrown into contact with alien races. Some common language was a necessity; talkee-talkee is the result. But despite the importation of many foreign words, the dominating characteristic of talkee-talkee is the pure intonation of the West African tongues.

The musical effect is enhanced by the use of distinct tones, and words or phrases are often sung in a sustained pitch, in a manner made familiar to Western ears by the Chinese language. The phrase that occurs on page 45, *So matti, fie you tang,* is intoned with a rising inflection, prolonged on the last word. Sharp inflections of single words are also common, such as the word for the palate, *tu-tu.* But the musical nature of talkee-talkee is most evident when the Bush Negroes are communicating across the water. We have already described how they talk from one canoe to another, across great distances, by lowering their voices and drawing out the tones resonantly. There is still ringing in our ears the long drawn-out *Ah-e-e-e* of the boatmen, sounding across the yellow waters of the Surinam.

The individual words are strung together with very loose

/68 cont./

561 The class of the young people, yuŋku sama, has definite
• 198 activities; "style," that is to say, elegance, dancing, singing; it has a special language made up from taki-taki by inversion or addition of syllables. When the language begins to be known outside the group of young people, it is abandoned and another is invented. These past years the language in vogue was akɔɔpina, of Djuka origin; it had given rise to a whole folklore of songs.

561 Two other age classes appear to be rather clearly differentiated: that of the elders /69/ - gaã sama - (older than some 50 years), whose voices are preponderant in the councils, and that of the old men - gaãndi sama - (older than 65 to 70 years).

[888] It is conceded by all that only the elders possess wisdom and knowledge, and in principle, in a discussion, the opinion of the eldest of them has the force of law.

575 Neither does one perceive among the Refugee Blacks any customary societies playing a role comparable to the men's society
571 in the Sudan for example. In a general way their social life, very individualistic in spite of appearances, knows no other organization than the one resulting from kinship ties.

767 Nevertheless, the organization of the men within each village with an eye to the mourning ceremonies can be regarded as a rough approximation to customary societies:

--Kisimã or coffin-makers;

--Olɔma or grave-diggers.

But these societies are narrowly specialized and their customary powers exist only as long as the duration of their effective work.

562 Men and women. Even within the lineage where men and women
571 call one another brother, sister, aunt ... the relations between men and women are marked by mistrust.

178
[173] /192 cont./ thus it is that they have kept a rather exact description of the elephant (leu) and the gorilla (malẽgwana).

[648] imposed on the slaves has prevailed. There is nothing surprising about that, since the slaveholders tried, in order to prevent revolts, to mix to the maximum the Blacks of the various tribes.

174 A certain number of men initiated in differing degrees
177 into African cults were among the rebels. They tried to conserve and transmit these rites, which their descendants have more or less transposed or deformed (2). As far as one can

[182] 2. The single fact that the vegetation and fauna differed totally from those of Africa immediately required a modification of ritual which called for infusions of leaves of numerous plants to which definite magical properties are attributed.

[198] As far as one can judge by the secret languages attached to these cults, in which are recognized many words deformed from the ordinary language, and a few Indian words, these cults in their present state must
[178] differ appreciably from the ones which gave them birth. In fact, the only thing the Refugee Blacks have authentically kept is concepts, metaphysical and moral ideas.

/199 cont./

787 [191] The phenomena of possession exist among other populations of the Guianas and especially among the Amerindians, but among the Refugee Blacks they have special and well-defined forms.

--For the duration of possession, the ordinary consciousness of the man is totally abolished. When he comes back to himself, he no longer remembers anything and the others present [191] have to repeat to him what the divinity revealed. This total loss of consciousness during possession appears to be a very constant phenomenon with the Blacks, in Africa as much as in [114] America. Professor de Goeje calls attention to the fact that the Indian medicine man, on the contrary, does not lose /200/ consciousness during his trances and is supposed to receive, himself, the revelations of the spirits.

When a man is possessed by a divinity, in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks he is no longer there; what his body may do is not attributed to him at all. They say: "The gadu does this, says that, dances in such a way." If the gadu hurt someone (but that practically never happens) or broke something, its bearer would not have any responsibility.

787 --The divinity expresses itself in a language peculiar to • 198 it; we shall see further on that there are four categories of [196] divinities likely to become incarnate in men, which corresponds to four secret languages of which in practice only two are known by the Boni, at least by the oldest among them.

The bearer of the divinity, in his usual state of consciousness, knows in general this language, which he has learned from a teacher if it is a matter of a possession desired by him and obtained with the help of definite practices.

But there are also numerous cases of unprovoked possession (in the kunu especially) and people state that in this case the divinity speaks its language just as well, although its bearer has never learned it;

/201 cont./

791 787 [794] teacher and who teach a small group of disciples - kineki -, without distinction of villages or lineages and under their sole responsibility; each one, man or woman, is absolutely free to pursue his teaching.

/202/ These teachers are not themselves possessed, but they are believed to know the processes which permit the neophyte to obtain possession with the minimum of risks. They accept the [776] fact, however, that that involves dangers, for one cannot oblige a particular gadu to come into someone, and one may in its place obtain an undesirable gadu.

791 787 776 Procedures vary according to the categories of gadu sought. But they involve three elements which are always found in one form or another:

[798] --They begin by teaching the pupil the language of the divinity, or rudiments at the very least (as we shall point out further on, these languages appear to be in decline); these lessons are private;

[824] --On behalf of a group of pupils, the teacher prepares infusions of certain leaves which are suited to the divinity in question. It is thought that the god likes these plants and that they have the power to attract it.

[788] In certain cults it is required of the pupil to utter at the same time formulas inviting the god to come into him. But this is not general; in the cult of the Papa gadu especially, the teachers bathe the students in the greatest silence.

791 787 824 At the end of the session, the student is often asked to drink a little of the infusion. One might believe that it is a matter of a process having a physical action, certain plants possibly containing hypnotic substances; but except for one aspect of the cult of the Kumēnti of which we shall speak later, this does not seem true; especially about the plants believed to attract the Papa gadu, it seems that they have received this role because of their color or odor. Our feeling is that, at least [562] for the Papa gadu cult which appeals more especially to women, suggestion plays an essential part.

/203 cont./

153 787 791 Possession begins progressively; in the beginning the divinity does not find in its bearer sufficient passivity, it does not succeed well in expressing itself through his mouth, spectators observe only incoherent gestures and hear only unintelligible stammerings. The pupil must continue his training for a long time in order to become a suitable bearer.

789 The god, when it has just entered a man, always begins by rendering homage in its language to Masa Gadu, proclaiming that it acts only in his name and by his will.

[576] [198] Then it greets those present, employing formulas which are the exact transposition into its language of the ordinary Boni formulas of politeness; that even if it is getting ready to speak to them in the harshest manner.

The god speaks then in its language, saying not very intelligible things to the audience that appear to be related to what goes on in its country, to its family (for it is believed that these lower gods have a family). Finally, it begins to speak in ordinary language in order to be understood by those present, and answers questions.

796 787 825 Various categories of gods capable of bringing on possession. The Refugee Blacks assume that four categories of lower gods exist:

The first category consists of a series of gods which present themselves to men under very different aspects but which are nevertheless felt to be of the same nature. All speak the Kumenti language, all are well disposed toward men and do not exercise against them the kunu, that is, the curse;

--The Kumẽnti, which have the appearance of jaguars and live in the bush;

--The Djadja, which have the appearance of ocelots;

--The Opete, which have the appearance of the urubu and which reside in the air;

/203 cont./

776 787 825 --The Bũnsuŋki, which have the appearance of Indian women and which reside in the waters of the rivers;

The second category is that of the Ampuku, much feared [784] gods of the bush, likely to exercise the kunu against men. The [198] Ampuku speak a language which is very well known to the Saramaka but which nobody speaks in Boni country. When they wish to be understood, they speak the ordinary Saramaka dialect. They can, it is said, /204/ be seen at night in the bush in the form of unknown men dressed in the manner of the Refugee Blacks;

The third category is that of the Vɔɔdũ or Papa gadu, gods still more feared, which become incarnate in the boa snake [198] dagowe. They speak the Papa language;

776 787 [198] Finally, much feared also are the Kãntamasu, gods of the termitaries, which speak a language which nobody understands and use the Kumenti language to make themselves understood.

It is important to note that there is not a god Kumẽnti, a god Ampuku, etc., as there was in the pantheon of the Ancients a god Mars, a god Vulcan. For the Refugee Blacks those are generic names like Frenchman, Englishman. Questioned about a phenomenon of possession, they will answer: "It is Ampuku who makes," but in the same way they would say in front of a boat: "It is Saramaka who makes."

776 787 825 The relationships between these gods and their animal form are obscure. For the Vɔɔdũ it is clear that people believe they really live in the dagowe snakes, since the accidental death of one of these snakes in the burning of a clearing is considered a calamity which risks bringing a kunu. But that does not prove that a divine character is attributed to the snake itself. As for the Kumẽnti, there does not appear to be any precise bond between the genie and its jaguar appearance. If one meets a jaguar, one may fire on him all the same without inconvenience. If he is the support of a Kumẽnti, the shot will not be able to touch him, the god will not get angry about it.

/210 cont./

The Bumba gadu, other gods of the same nature and equally feared, have as bearers other categories of snakes, principally the great anaconda water snakes.

The Vɔɔdū, we have said, are feared; they can exercise on a lineage the collective curse called kunu. But, no more than the Kumēnti do not represent a principle of good, they do not represent a principle of evil. Not all are so badly disposed toward men, and even if one of them is the enemy of a lineage, it is not for that reason badly disposed toward the rest of men. However this may be, the cult of possession of the Papa gadu is not at all in decline among the Boni. According to the cross-checking we have been able to do, of the 670 persons living on the French bank there are at least 40 to 50 who have a Papa gadu, the great majority of them old women.

/211/ The Voodū /sic/ are much feared, and for that very reason much respected. They are oracles which are consulted very often, without consideration of the evil their kunu has done and will still do. A god which exercises the kunu but which is provisionally declared appeased may be consulted without danger; it is always assumed that in any case its bearer, if he respects its commands, has nothing to fear from it.

It is possible that, very unconsciously, women use the fear that the Papa gadu gods inspire in order to maintain their independence and privileged position in Refugee Black society.

Instruction in possession appears to take as a pattern the same principles as that which correspond to the Kumēnti. It involves the teaching of the Papa language; this language appeared to us to be in decline; in fact, it is used only for formulas of greeting; then the possessed people vaticinate in ordinary language. Instruction in possession also involves daily ablutions with decoctions of leaves; certain of these mixtures are particularly complicated (it is said that they include more than a hundred different kinds of leaves). Instruction is essentially individual; however it also includes dances; on this occasion a

/211 cont./

153 special drum is used, about two meters long and very narrow,
791 devoid of any decoration, which is called lãŋga dɔ̃ or papa
787 dɔ̃.
534

To call on her gita, the possessed woman (they are almost
787 always women) stands, puts on a piece of cloth which she always
[562] keeps nearby and always takes along with her when she travels:
this is the garment of the god; it consists of a sort of scarf
crossed in front; then she throws white clay, pemba, on her feet
from right to left and left to right while invoking the god.
Possession is almost immediate. One sees the woman's eyes
roll up and her expression become haggard. The god does not
cover himself entirely with pemba like the Kumẽnti, he makes
himself a sort of headband on the forehead with white clay.
787 He begins with an invocation to Masa Gadu said in ordinary
788 language.
539

[782] "Masa gadu, gi mi pimisi, beka mi na pikin nẽŋge; ala
sani di mi ɔ taki, na yu mu gi mi kaakiti, beka na yu abi mi
kaakiti, da mi ɲyãfalu gi yu."

"Masa Gadu, I implore you, for I am a humble creature;
(in) all that I am going to say, it is you who will give me
strength, for my strength is in you; I shall exalt you."

787 Next come formulas of welcome to those present, which
788 are the exact translation of the formulas of greeting of everyday
[198] life, then songs, all in the Papa language. After about a quarter
of an hour, it enters a hut and sits down, answering in ordinary
language the questions of those present, always in a singing
tone.

787 Possession by Papa gadu does not have the bestial character
of possession by Kumẽnti; outside of the dances, it does not
involve brutish gestures or bizarre acts; the possessed woman
hums softly in a shrill voice, moving with graceful gestures.
[531] /212/ Sometimes she draws strange signs on the huts; the Boni
state that that is a kind of writing, that other possessed people

/262 cont./
824 778 door; it was a particularly feared kāndu that no thief would have dared to remove.

825 778 [776] --The Kāntamasu are the divinities, especially maleficent and hostile to men, who live in the termitaries (these are termites proper, who make their nest in the earth, and not wood lice, much more common). There is one to each termitary.

[789] After a meticulous examination of the soil of the clearing, one marks all the termitaries /263/ and sprinkles each of them with a preparation containing leaves, pink clay kukusa, and manioc juice. One adjures the genie to go away, no matter where.

It happens that in spite of all the precautions taken a [787] termitary is forgotten. Then, several days later, one will [784] have the consternation of seeing the Kāntamasu reveal itself in someone of the lineage; it announces that it is going to [782] exercise its kunu (curse). It is temporarily appeased by offerings of tafia, various drinks, red cloth.

796 198 787 The Kāntamasu call themselves the Akɔlo. Through the mouth of their bearers they speak a language nobody understands. However, when they wish to be understood by those present they speak Kumēnti.

755 784 Observation in Boniville, January, 1957:

A..., boatman of the border-fixing mission, asks for three days off. His wife, Masauman, has been ill for several days; divination (in this particular case the gita of a female relative in his lineage) showed that it was the doing of a Kāntamasu injured in the burning of the clearing which he himself, A..., cut for his wife in October. The Kāntamasu has not yet manifested itself directly, but a kunu threatens; to appease it he must put in action the remedy known only 000 to M..., an old man of Asīsi. He will go to the spot, following